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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

8 MAY 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY NEWS: "Withdrawal Operations of an American Infantry Division", by Colonel A. Slobodenko

1. Enclosed is a verbatim translation of an article which appeared in the Soviet Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal Military News (Voyennyy Vestnik). This publication is classified SECRET by the Soviets, and the issue in which this article appeared was distributed to officers from regimental commander upward.

2. In the interests of protecting our source, this material should be handled on a need-to-know basis within your office. Requests for extra copies of this report or for utilization of any part of this document in any other form should be addressed to the originating office.

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Richard Helms
Deputy Director (Plans)

Enclosure

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Original: The Director of Central Intelligence

cc: The Director of Intelligence and Research,
Department of State

The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

The Director for Intelligence,
The Joint Staff

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence
Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence
Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence
U. S. Air Force

The Director, National Security Agency

Director, Division of Intelligence
Atomic Energy Commission

National Indications Center

Chairman, Guided Missiles and Astronautics
Intelligence Committee

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Deputy Director for Intelligence

Assistant Director for National Estimates

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COUNTRY : USSR

SUBJECT : MILITARY NEWS: "Withdrawal Operations of an American Infantry Division", by Colonel A. Slobodenko

DATE OF INFO : January 1961

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Following is a verbatim translation of an article entitled "Withdrawal Operations of an American Infantry Division", by Colonel A. Slobodenko. This article appeared in Issue No. 34, 1961 of the Soviet military publication Collection of Articles of the Journal Military News (Voyennyy Vestnik.) This publication is classified SECRET by the Soviets and is published by the USSR Ministry of Defense.

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Withdrawal Operations of an American Infantry Division

by Colonel A. Slobodenko

In American service regulations, instructions, and training manuals it is emphasized that military engagements involving the employment of nuclear weapons will be characterized by a high rate of mobility, sudden changes in the situation, and a quick change from one type of combat to another. Withdrawal is considered to be as normal a type of combat operation as advance or defense, and it is being practiced in almost all exercises and maneuvers of American troops (particularly in West Germany).

Withdrawal operations are considered by the Americans to be any operations involving movement to the rear or in a direction away from the enemy.

They may be carried out with various aims. The most important is to exhaust the enemy and inflict losses on him. Withdrawal operations may be carried out also to avoid battle under unfavorable conditions and to put the enemy in a position unfavorable to him, to permit the use of part of one's forces on other sectors of the front, to gain time, to disengage from the enemy, and to straighten the front line. A withdrawal may be carried out with the aim of removing one's own troops from the area of an enemy atomic strike and to take up a defensive position on a defense line organized in the depth. But, apart from these aims, which have a primarily passive character, provision is made for more decisive and active aims, such as enticing the enemy into a previously prepared "pocket". Once the advancing enemy is concentrated in such a "pocket", he presents a good target for atomic weapons.

It is considered that withdrawal operations have much in common with defensive ones, both in aims and methods of combat operations, but they differ from defensive operations in that they provide for a predetermined loss of ground and represent an organized movement of troops to the rear. They can take the form of disengagement, delaying operations, and withdrawal. In American service regulations it is noted

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that a large unit which is in direct contact with the enemy must bear in mind the various types of withdrawal operations and use them simultaneously or in sequence. For example, after disengagement, troops can start a withdrawal. A withdrawal, in turn, can be carried out under cover of units carrying out delaying operations.

Disengagement describes the operations of troops which break away from the enemy with all or part of their forces in order to regroup and carry out other operations.

The main task, according to American views, is to mislead the enemy regarding the intention to withdraw, and to create the impression that a stubborn defense is being prepared on the sector concerned. To this end the following may be carried out: engineer activity, the erection of obstacles, opening of fire, reconnaissance, and counterattacks with reserves. Disengagement may also be effected under cover of atomic strikes delivered against concentrations of enemy troops or other important objectives within range. (Sketch 1).

It is recommended that disengagement should be carried out by night or under conditions of poor visibility. Nighttime is considered the most favorable. A decision to disengage by day is usually taken only in those cases when the situation demands decisive actions to prevent a division's being destroyed.

Before starting a disengagement action, a rear defense line (position) or a reassembly area is assigned to the withdrawing troops. It must be selected at such a distance that, in order to seize it, the enemy will have to regroup his forces and begin a new attack. To coordinate the operations and control of withdrawing units, they are given clearly defined lines along which they should move, and posts are set up on these lines. (Sketch 1)

The disengagement of troops is carried out by echelons. The withdrawal is covered by part of the forces being left in contact with the enemy.

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Usually the first units to withdraw are those in the rear, and after them the units which are in the forward part of the battle area. As a rule, a disengagement is carried out in the following order: first to withdraw are the troops which are detailed to organize and occupy rear defense lines (positions); they are followed by the rear and maintenance units (subunits); and last to withdraw are the units which formed the first echelon. The artillery withdraws together with the units which it supports.

Special attention is given to the withdrawal of means of atomic attack. Provision is made for their timely move to new firing positions, to the taking of special measures to protect them on the march, and to positioning them with the divisional reserves or with other combat units or subunits which were the first to be withdrawn to the rear defense position.

The success of a disengagement by night is directly related by the Americans to the ability to mislead the enemy, to concealing troop operations, and to exercising reliable control over them.

When disengaging in the absence of pressure from the enemy, combat groups of the first echelon leave subunits to maintain direct contact with the enemy; as a rule, the strength of such subunits does not exceed one third of the personnel of the combat groups. These subunits, reinforced with mortars, machine guns, and antitank weapons, try to mislead the enemy by pretending that the defense positions are occupied by troops at full strength. To this end, they fire from a variety of positions and maintain their former system of radio communications, illumination of the locality, and their patrolling. To support the operations of these subunits, part of the artillery is left behind, which, with the object of simulating the activity of all the artillery of the large unit, intensifies its fire and must cover the disengagement of the rest of the artillery. When disengaging at night, units of the main forces withdraw simultaneously and on a broad front by companies: distances between units (subunits) are reduced, and the movement is carried out secretly and with combat security measures. Subunits assigned to maintain close contact with the enemy

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disengage at a given time or when ordered to do so. The time of disengagement of the covering subunits is fixed so that they can break away from the enemy by dawn.

Sometimes, when it is necessary, counterattacks may be mounted to support a disengagement at night.

As a rule, a disengagement by day is carried out under pressure from the enemy, i.e., it is forced. When this happens, it is essential to make maximum use of broken ground and of any bad weather which interferes with the enemy's ground and air observation.

Covering units for ensuring the disengagement of the main forces by day are formed from second echelon personnel (reserves). If the terrain permits, they occupy flank positions, from which they can best assure the disengagement of the main forces and at the same time make the enemy carry out a corresponding maneuver, thereby making it possible to gain some time. Antitank defense is organized at road junctions and at the most dangerous axes along the lines of troop withdrawal, and it assists in holding key points in the area.

The procedure of disengagement by day, recommended by American military regulations, is as follows: units which are in contact with the enemy disengage in extended order and move to the nearest assembly area.

If the situation permits, units which have disengaged use motor transport to withdraw to a new rear defense line (position) or to a new assembly area. Covering units secure their own withdrawal by fighting delaying actions.

As a rule, the first units to disengage from a battle are those who are least involved in actually fighting the enemy.

Reserves may be used to occupy a selected position from which they can cover the withdrawal of troops which are in contact with the enemy, or they can be used to mount a counterattack with the aim of holding up and disorganizing enemy attacking troops and permitting the withdrawal of their own units involved in the fighting. In those instances,

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the counterattacking units are not usually given the task of occupying a specific sector of the terrain.

Organic and supporting tank subunits are used to secure the flanks and to cover, from the front, the disengagement of the main forces. The disengagement of artillery is done by echelons in such a way as to avoid any interruption in firing at the enemy. Smoke may be used to ensure secrecy of movement and concentration of troops on open ground.

A disengagement is considered concluded when combat groups withdraw to rear defense positions or to assembly areas in the rear of these defense positions.

Delaying operations are those operations in which forces evacuate an area with the aim of gaining time, and, without being drawn into a decisive battle, they inflict maximum losses on the enemy from one holding position or from a succession of prepared lines of defense.

Delaying operations based on a single position are carried out when the area is limited, when the enemy must be held for a short time, and when the conditions of the terrain do not permit the preparation of a series of advantageous holding positions. In this case, the holding position is organized in the same way as a combat (forward) position in position (mobile) defense, depending on the duration of the delaying operations, the nature of the terrain, the availability of forces and weapons, and the width of the zone of combat operations. The conduct of delaying operations from a single position is distinguished from that of position and mobile defense mainly by the fact that, in this case, a protracted holding of the terrain is not anticipated. In addition, counterattacks are carried out with the aim of ensuring the disengagement from the enemy of one's own units and subunits, and arrangements for defending a holding position are usually made hastily. Delaying operations from a single position require roughly the same tactics as position defense. However, everything possible is done to avoid a decisive battle, and to deny the enemy an opportunity of approaching the holding position and drawing the main forces of the division into battle. The mobile reserve is ready to give quick support to forward

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subunits occupying a holding position if they are threatened with destruction by the enemy.

Delaying operations from a succession of positions aim at putting up a limited resistance to the enemy in the first position and resuming resistance at subsequent positions. The use of several successive positions is the most usual way of carrying out a delaying action. The method is employed when it is essential to delay the enemy for the maximum period of time when there is considerable space and when local conditions permit the preparation of several successive holding positions.

Holding positions must be prepared at a considerable distance from each other so as to force the enemy to deploy, regroup, and reorganize his attack before each line of defense. Besides the main holding positions, intermediate ones may be prepared with the object of forcing the enemy to lose additional time in deploying his artillery and troops and of reducing the speed of his advance.

On exercises carried out by American troops, main positions were prepared at a distance of 20 to 25 km from one other and intermediate ones at 10 to 12 km from one other.

The positions are not made continuous. They consist of separate company strong points which are sited only on the main axes of a possible enemy attack. Regarding engineer work, these strong points may be provided with slit trenches for riflemen and positions for heavier weapons. Considerable attention is paid to creating field engineer and chemical obstacles between positions, in gaps between strong points, and especially on the flanks of troops occupying holding positions. Obstacles are created mainly along roads, in defiles, and on possible lines of attack by enemy tanks and mechanized infantry.

Fighting at the first holding position marks the beginning of delaying operations. In one case, it may not last long, and at the approach of the enemy to the first holding position, the defending troops will begin their withdrawal; in another case, resistance on this line

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may be more stubborn and more protracted.

In all cases, the units of a division carrying out delaying operations strive to inflict losses on the enemy and to delay his advance by using artillery fire and free rockets at long ranges with conventional and nuclear ammunition. In addition, they strive to mislead the enemy as regards the real locations of holding positions and the beginning of troop disengagement. Before the enemy can mount a decisive attack, forward subunits, under covering fire of subsequent echelons, withdraw to the next position. American regulations emphasize that the withdrawal of troops to a subsequent position must be done in good time.

There are two ways of conducting delaying operations from successive positions. The first consists of units withdrawing from the first holding position and putting up resistance in the second, then in the third, and so on.

The second method is that of alternating positions (cheredovanaya pozitsiya). The first echelon of a division normally withdraws under cover of the second echelon which holds the second (intermediate) position. Units of the first echelon occupy the next position. Sometimes two tactical groups may be formed to carry out delaying operations. On one of the exercises (Sketch 2) three combat groups reinforced by three artillery battalions (divizion) for direct support were included in one tactical group headed by the basic staff of the division. The second tactical group headed by a reserve staff included two combat groups, reinforced by two artillery battalions (divizion) for direct support, and a reconnaissance battalion (batalon). A tank battalion (batalon) and an artillery battalion (divizion) for general support were directly subordinate to the divisional commander.

The first tactical group occupied the first holding position and engaged the enemy while the second was preparing and occupying an intermediate holding position. The first tactical group withdrew through the battle formations of the second group and occupied the next position. The successive withdrawal of troops from line to line is done in this way. Weapons of nuclear

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attack withdraw so that they are always ready to deliver a strike. Batteries of 203.2 mm howitzers withdraw from one holding position to another, and a battery of Honest John free rockets occupies firing positions behind the main lines. (Sketch 2)

It is emphasized in American service regulations that the conduct of delaying operations requires constant maintenance of contact with the enemy and discovery of his intentions in order to permit timely measures to be taken to counter them. It is also indicated in American regulations that troops carrying out delaying operations must not be drawn into protracted engagements but should disengage in good time and withdraw to subsequent lines. However, it is emphasized that ground should not be given up unnecessarily to the enemy, and, if the situation demands it, it may be necessary to put up a strong resistance at one of the lines and even go over to a counterattack.

American troops also impede an enemy advance by using engineer and chemical obstacles. Obstacles are prepared beforehand, and are also made during the conduct of delaying operations on the most threatening axes (special engineer subunits are assigned for this).

Defense in place is of a hurried nature, because the troops go over to the defense in a limited time, often under pressure from the enemy, and, in the majority of cases, to lines which have been provided with little engineer protection.

American regulations and training materials provide for delivering counterattacks while conducting delaying operations. It is true, that they indicated that the possibilities of an infantry division's conducting counterattacks are limited if it is not reinforced with means of transportation, tanks, and artillery, It is considered that the delivery of counterattacks by forces consisting of one combat group and a tank battalion (batalon) supported by atomic strikes, may achieve significant results. Such a counterattack may delay and disorganize advancing enemy troops.

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An infantry division can conduct delaying operations on a front of 15 to 20 km. and, in some cases, in an even wider zone.

The withdrawal, according to American views, is a retreating maneuver, accomplished deliberately when there is no direct pressure from the enemy. These are operations in which troops strive to avoid battle because of the given conditions of the situation.

A withdrawal may be carried out with the aim of breaking well away from the enemy, taking up defensive positions on more favorable terrain, straightening out the front line, or transferring combat operations to another area. If a disengagement precedes a withdrawal, the withdrawal begins from the moment when the troops are formed in route columns.

It is considered that the final area of concentration or the rear defense line (position) to which the troops are withdrawing must be advantageous and favorable for continuing combat operations. Its distance may vary, and in each specific case it depends on the situation, the combat task, the forces and capabilities of the enemy and one's own troops, and also on meteorological conditions and the nature of the terrain.

The march formation and the number of route columns during the withdrawal depend on the roads available and the operations of the enemy. An infantry division usually withdraws in two to four columns, with a distance of up to 5 km. between columns. Units of the main forces usually withdraw simultaneously. If the number of roads is limited, or there is a threat to a flank from the enemy, the troops withdraw by echelon.

When withdrawing, a division makes the same kind of arrangements for its protection as on the march. The main role belongs to the rear guard.

A rear guard is provided by each column. It is the main force defending each column from a surprise enemy attack. Its composition depends on enemy forces and the likelihood of his making an attack. In a combat group

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it may consist of an infantry company reinforced with tanks and artillery. When a division withdraws in one column, the rear guard may have assigned to it anything up to a reinforced combat group. If the situation permits, the rear guard withdraws in route formation which is the reverse of the formation of the order of march of an advance guard. When there is contact with the enemy the rear guard fights by means of delaying operations.

Highly mobile troops are sent out for flank protection -- armored and motorized subunits reinforced by self-propelled artillery and engineer subunits.

The main forces withdraw in route columns formed in reverse order to that used when carrying out a normal march. The main part of the tanks moves at the tail of the route columns. Part of the field artillery is also at the tail of the column, and part is distributed among the columns so as to render timely support both to the protecting units and to the main forces in the event fighting becomes necessary.

Antiaircraft artillery is distributed among the columns to provide antiaircraft defense of troops on the whole route, or doubles back to ensure the passage of the columns through important defiles and passes.

Engineer troops proceed in front of the route columns and carry out such work as is necessary to ensure the movement of the main forces. Part of the engineer troops moves behind the route columns to prepare engineer obstacles or carry out demolitions on enemy lines of advance.

Rear units and installations move in columns , usually near the head of the column, in such a way that they can, in case of necessity, service their units quickly without interfering with the deployment of troops.

American field regulations define the following procedure for carrying out a withdrawal of troops. A withdrawal begins with the movement to an assigned concentration area of rear and maintenance units (subunits). Disengagement is carried out at the appointed time after which the troops make for the assembly areas, break into small route columns and begin

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the withdrawal. Depending on the distance from the enemy, the small columns are joined together into larger ones and proceed in accordance with the plan of withdrawal.

At the beginning of a withdrawal, the control of troops is exercised in a decentralized manner; later, control is usually centralized in the divisional commanding officer.

In a withdrawal of short duration which can be accomplished during one night, subunits covering the troop disengagement can fully ensure the withdrawal. If the withdrawal takes longer, these subunits are reinforced, and proper steps are taken to provide march security, and thereby ensure the movement of the main forces.

A study of American views on the organization and conduct of retreating operations enables us to determine several strong and weak aspects which should be considered when studying and working out our views on organizing and conducting an attack in pursuit of a withdrawing enemy.

American views on organizing and conducting a retreat are permeated by a desire to mislead the enemy as regards their real intentions. Therefore, in a modern battle, it is essential for our advancing large units, units, and subunits to carry out thorough reconnaissance continuously, particularly intensifying its activities at night and under conditions of poor visibility. The timely determination of the beginning of an enemy withdrawal may permit the employment of nuclear weapons just at that moment when the enemy troops leave the protection of their prepared positions and present a most advantageous target for a nuclear strike. The employment of nuclear weapons at this moment can inflict heavy losses on the enemy, disorganize his control, and lead to his rapid annihilation.

It should be borne in mind that the enemy will also strive to employ nuclear weapons to cover the start and conduct of a withdrawal. Therefore, the timely discovery and neutralization of nuclear weapons of attack in a division can, to a considerable degree, ensure the successful destruction of the retreating enemy.

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When conducting a withdrawal, provision must be made for using the high mobility of modern troops and their great striking power. Therefore, for the successful pursuit of units of a modern American division, it is essential to assign mobile tank and motorized units equipped with weapons to engage enemy tanks. It is essential to have units capable of moving fast not only along roads, which the enemy will strive to make unusable by our troops, but also off the roads.

As the Americans themselves emphasize, troops in withdrawal have a whole series of weak points. They are vulnerable to airborne landings. The extensive employment of tactical airborne landings can disrupt the withdrawal plan of an infantry division and the control of its units, force it to be drawn into battle under unfavorable conditions, and bring about its encirclement and the destruction of its units and subunits.

The flanks of a withdrawing division are extremely vulnerable. Bold turning of the flanks, pursuit along parallel routes, and penetration into the rear through gaps between withdrawing subunits can lead to dispersal, encirclement, and destruction of withdrawing troops.

The successful conduct of a withdrawal requires development according to a plan, good organization, and efficiency of control. The task of our advancing troops is to disrupt the plan and organization of the withdrawal, disorganize control, turn the withdrawal into a flight, and conclude it by completely destroying the enemy. Our troops may achieve this by the skilful use of nuclear weapons, by bold operations on the part of mobile troops, and by airborne landings.

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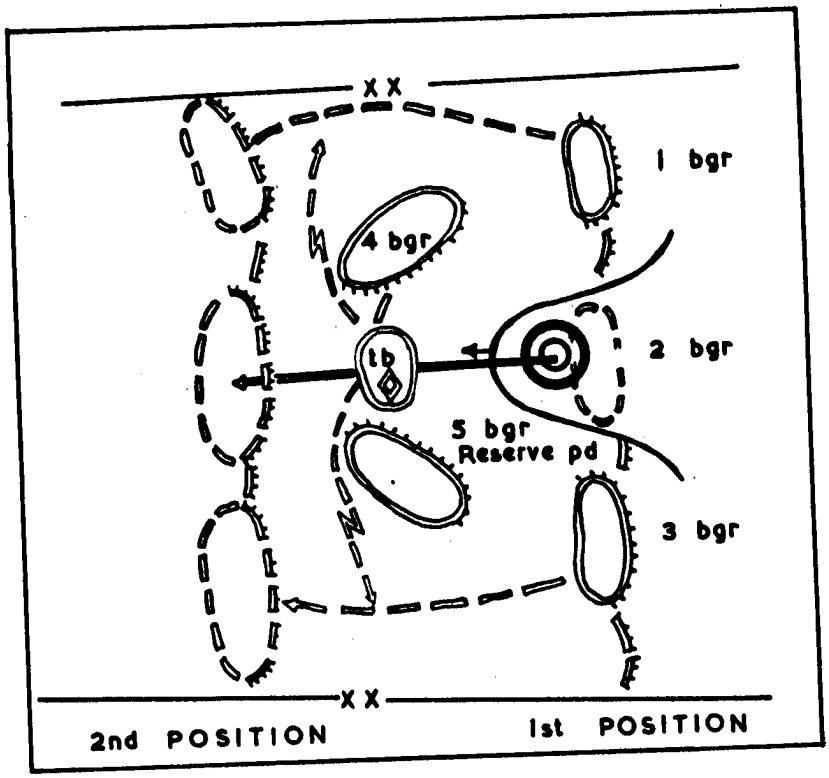

Sketch 1: Disengagement of an Infantry Division with Nuclear Weapon Support

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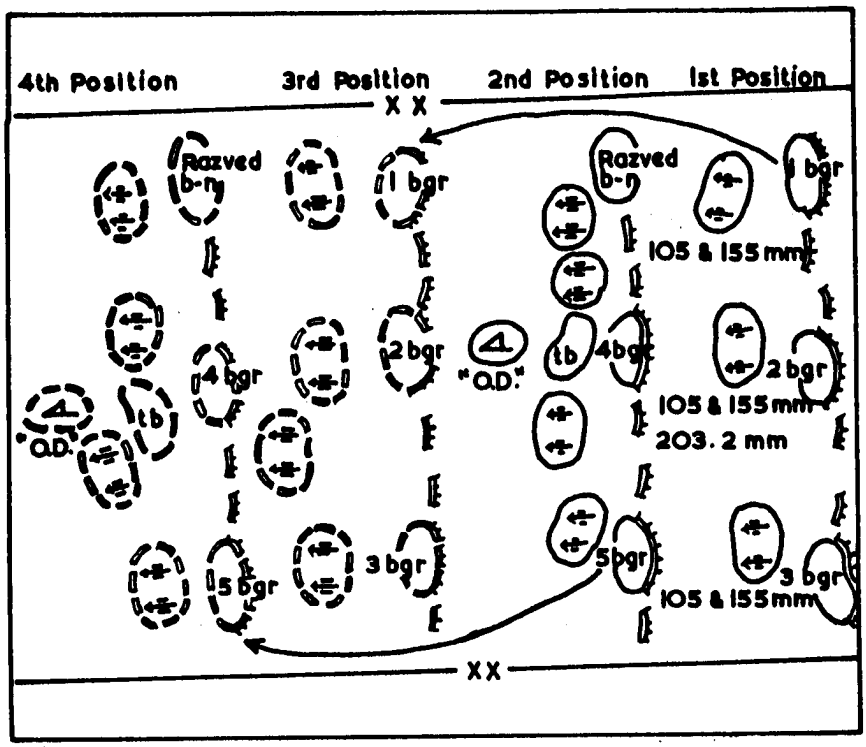

Sketch 2: The Conduct of Delaying Operations of an Infantry Division with Alternating Lines

Legend

bgr	Combat Group
tb	Tank Battalion
pd	Infantry Division
Razved b-n	Reconnaissance Battalion
"O.D."	Honest John

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